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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002734

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/05/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [KWBG](#) [MARR](#) [TU](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: PERES AND ABBAS TO MEET IN ANKARA

REF: A. ANKARA 2647

[1](#)B. ANKARA 2640

[1](#)C. ANKARA 2587

Classified By: PolCouns Janice G. Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and Comment: Turkey will host Israeli President Peres and Palestinian Authority President Abbas for concurrent visits from November 11-13. GOT officials say they have scheduled the coinciding visits to reinforce U.S. and others' efforts prior to a possible Middle East meeting. This also underscores the Turks' continued push for an invitation to Annapolis. Prior to Abbas' arrival late on November 12, Peres will conduct a traditional head-of-state visit with all the normal protocols. On November 13, accompanied and introduced by Turkish President Gul, Peres and Abbas will consecutively address the Turkish parliament. Peres reportedly understands the risks and optics of appearing on the same stage as Abbas. The Peres and Abbas visits are the latest in a series of invitations to key high-level Middle East leaders aimed at increasing Turkey's visibility and credibility as a regional facilitator. The GOT intends such meetings to complement ongoing international efforts, but could coordinate better. End Summary and Comment.

[1](#)2. (C) As part of Turkey's ongoing Middle East engagement efforts, GOT officials have actively reached out to regional capitals in the weeks prior to the Iraq Expanded Neighbors Ministerial and the upcoming Middle East peace process meeting in Annapolis (reftels). The concurrent visits of Israeli President Peres, November 11-13, and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas, November 12-13, are the capstone of recent GOT endeavors. Originally envisioned as separate events, GOT officials say they coalesced the visits to complement international efforts in the run up to the Middle East meeting. The trips also serve to burnish the GOT's own regional facilitation credentials.

[1](#)3. (C) Israeli Embassy Spokesman Amit Zarouk told us that prior to Abbas' arrival late November 12, Peres will attend a series of bilateral events marked by all the normal protocols of a state-level visit. On November 11, Peres will address a group of Bilkent University students followed by a state dinner hosted by President Gul. Bilateral meetings with PM Erdogan, President Gul, and FM Babacan on November 12 are expected to focus on the overall relationship, as well as on

private sector-led, and GOT-supported, industrial revitalization projects in Palestine and a multi-pipeline energy project between the two nations.

14. (C) MFA Israel and Palestine Desk Officer Mural Omeroglu confirmed that President Gul will host Peres and Abbas at the Presidential Palace on the morning of November 13. Following a joint press conference with Gul, Peres and Abbas will consecutively address the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) for thirty minutes each. Peres will speak first, followed by Abbas. Zarouk explained that prior to the GOT's scheduling of the Abbas visit, the GOI had requested that Peres be allowed to talk to the Turkish Parliament as a follow-on to then-President Sezer's June 2006 speech to the Knesset. The Turks were initially reluctant. When Peres agreed to lengthen his visit to accommodate Abbas' schedule, the GOI insisted. Given past experiences sharing the stage with Palestinian leaders, Peres is understandably apprehensive. The Israelis also expressed concerns that Abbas will be extended head-of-state courtesies.

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